

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 NEAE-00 CIAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 210
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY
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AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PDEV, PBOR, IS
SUBJECT: OFRA PROTEST MEETING AND AFTERMATH

REF: TEL AVIV 11083

1. SUMMARY: GUSH EMUNIM CONSIDERS PROTEST MEETING AT
OFRA DECEMBER 27 A SUCCESS. DEMONSTRATIONS WILL CONTINUE TO BE THE
GUSH'S PRIMARY OPPOSITION TACTIC AT THIS POINT. BEGIN TAKING CURRENT
RESISTANCE TO HIS PEACE PROPOSALS IN STRIDE, BUT ERUPTION IN
FUTURE OF VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS LEADING TO ARRESTS COULD
PUT SERIOUS PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURES ON
HIS HEALTH. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE OFRA MEETING TO COORDINATE EFFORTS AGAINST BEGIN'S
PEACE PROPOSALS DREW 300 REPRESENTATIVES FROM GUS
EMUNIM, THE COMPLETE LAND OF ISRAEL MOVEMENT, AND SETTLEMENTS
IN THE JORDAN VALLEY, SINAI, RAFAH APPROACHES, WEST BANK,
AND ON THE GOLAN HEIGHTS. THE ONLY GOLAN AND JORDAN
VALLEY SETTLEMENTS WHICH BOYCOTTED THE MEETING WERE THOSE
BELONGING TO THE KIBBUTZ MEUHAD FEDERATION (SEE SEPTTEL).

THE MEETING WAS FILLED WITH FAMILIAR FACES FROM THE DEMONSTRATIONS AGAINST THE ALIGNMENT --HANAN PORAT, GERSHON SHOFAT, AND RABBI LEVINGER OF THE GUSH; ZVI SHILOACH OF THE COMPLETE LAND OF ISRAEL MOVEMENT; AND MK'S MEIR HAR-ZION AND RABBI DRUCKMAN OF THE NRP AND MK'S YIGAL COHEN AND MOSHE SHAMIR OF THE LIKUD.

3. BEGIN WAS SHARPLY CRITICIZED AT THE MEETING, AND PARTICIPANTS CALLED FOR A MASS DEMONSTRATION AT THE KNESSET; A MASS MARCH TO YAMIT AT SOME FUTURE DATE; AND WILDCAT SETTLEMENT IN THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES. RESOLUTIONS ADOPTED AT THE END OF THE MEETING CALLED FOR AN IMMEDIATE DECLARATION OF ISRAELI SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL OF ERETZ YISRAEL. SELF - RULE FOR WEST BANK AND GAZA ARABS WAS TERMED THE BEGINNING OF FOREIGN RULE IN THE HOMELAND, AND SETTLERS DECLARED THEY WOULD NOT OBEY AN ARAB AUTHORITY. THE SETTLERS THREATENED THAT IF BEGIN WOULD NOT LEAD THE NATION PROPERLY "RELIEF AND DELIVERANCE WILL COME TO THE JEWS FROM ANOTHER SOURCE."

4. YISRAEL HAREL, YEDIOT REPORTER AND AN OBSERVER PARTICIPANT AT THE MEETING, GAVE US A READ-OUT FROM THE GUSH PERSPECTIVE. THE GUSH ARE VERY PLEASED BY THE TURNOUT, AND BELIEVE THE MEETING WENT BETTER THAN EXPECTED. BASED UPON THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED, GUSH LEADERS FEEL THAT THEY HAVE UNDERSTIMATED THE DEPTH OF POPULAR FEELING LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AGAINST BEGIN'S PEACE PROPOSALS. SADAT FORTUNATELY TURNED DOWN BEGIN'S PEACE PLAN, AND OPPOSITION TO BEGIN WILL NOW HAVE A CHANCE TO GAIN MOMENTUM. HOWEVER, IT IS STILL TOO EARLY FOR THIS GROWING DISAPPROVAL AMONG THE PUBLIC AT LARGE TO HAVE ANY IMPACT ON TODAY'S KNESSET VOTE.

HAREL CONSIDERED THE THREAT OF WILDCAT SETTLEMENT TO BE MERE RHETORIC. THERE ARE NO GUSH SETTLEMENT NUCLEI AVAILABLE, AND FROM NOW UNTIL JUNE NO REAL SETTLEMENT EFFORT IS POSSIBLE. ALL THAT THE GUSH CAN NOW DO, IN HAREL'S OPINION, IS TO DEMONSTRATE AGAINST BEGIN AND TRY TO EMBARRASS HIM WHEREVER POSSIBLE. GUSH LEADER PORAT IS PARTICULARLY BITTER AT BEGIN. HE FEELS TRICKED AND CHEATED BY HIM, AND IS ANXIOUS TO HIT BACK. (HAREL NOTED THAT PORAT WAS OBVIOUSLY A VERY INEXPERIENCED OR NAIVE POLITICIAN TO HAVE BEEN SO COMPLETELY TAKEN IN BY BEGIN.) HOWEVER, IT WILL BE DIFFICULT TO SUSTAIN ACTION BECAUSE GUSH ACTIVISTS AND SETTLERS MUST WORK AND SIMPLY CANNOT SPARE MUCH TIME FOR PROTEST ACTIVITY.

5. COMMENT: THE INITIAL SHOCK OF BEGIN'S PEACE PROPOSALS HAS NOW PASSED, AND OPPONENTS FEEL THAT THE TIME FOR ACTION HAS

COME. THE OFRA MEETING HAS SHOWN THAT LABOR-AFFILIATED
SETTLERS ARE WILLING TO A DEGREE TO PROTEST JOINTLY
WITH THE GUSH. YAMIT HAS HAD TWO GENERAL STRIKES OF SHORT DURATION
AND ITS SETTLERS HAVE BEEN PICKETING THE PRIME MINISTER'S
HOME. GUSH LEADER PORAT HAS RETURNED FROM THE US AND IS
DOING WHAT HE DOES BEST --ARRANGING DEMONSTRATIONS.
BEGIN HAS REACTED AS EXPECTED AND HANDLED PROTESTS IN A
LOW KEY MANNER. HE MET WITH SEVERAL OF THE YAMIT DEMON-
STRATORS IN AN EFFORT TO SOOTH THEM AND SHOW HIS CONCERN. HE IS
HANDLING OPPONENTS WITH KID GLOVES FOR IDEOLOGICAL AS WELL AS
POLITICAL MOTIVES. LIKE THEM , HE DOESN'T RELISH THE THOUGHT OF
CONCESSIONS ON THE TERRITORIES OR GIVING UP SETTLEMENTS, BUT RECOG-
NIZES THAT PAINFUL DECISIONS MUST BE MADE. SHOULD THE GUSH GO ALL
OUT WITH VIOLENT DEMONSTRATIONS LEADING TO ARRESTS, THIS WILL
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UNDOUBTEDLY HAVE A STRONG EFFECT ON BEGIN -THE MAN. IT
WILL NOT LEAD HIM TO MODIFY HIS POLICIES, BUT WILL INCREASE
THE PHYSICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRESSURE ON
HIS HEALTH.
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